

LETTERS
O F 4579.9
RELIGION,
BETWEEN

Theophilus and Eugenio.
K. Hand.

PART III.



L O N D O N:

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The First LETTER.

THEOPHILUS *to* EUGENIO.

S I R,



BEFORE I send you my farther practical Considerations upon Divine Love, I thought it proper to communicate to you the following Explanation of its Nature, to prevent some Mistakes about it. I must desire you to distinguish between that Superior Love, which is seated in the Will or rational Appetite, and that which is inferior, and properly passionate. When the Bent and Inclination of the Will, the commanding Faculty of the Soul, determined by an illuminated Understanding, that represents the Divine Being as the best and most amiable Object, chuses and adheres to him as such; this, in the highest Sense, is to be acknowledged Divine Love. By this it is, that a good Man prefers the Favour of God, and the Fruition of him for ever, before all other Enjoyments; and by this he makes his Creator his chief Happiness; and having now chosen him for his Portion and final Felicity, he engages sincerely in the Practice of Religion and Virtue, which he is convinced is the only Means to procure his ultimate End, that is, the Enjoyment of his Author, in the full Purity and Perfection of humane Nature. This is the Divine Love, that refines and enobles the Mind, that governs

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The Operations of the Soul, guides the Life, and denominates a man truly Religious: This Love to God, that resides in the upper Faculties of the Soul, and is indeed the Principle of moral Goodness, the divine Life, and the new Nature in a regenerate Man, is intellectual, serene, and in its self abstracted from corporeal Emotions, and vehement Agitations of the Spirits; but then it is as true, that when it exerts itself in a great Degree, it will certainly produce that inferior Love, that is seated among the Passions: For such is our Constitution; such is the natural Order of our Faculties, and Springs of Operation, that whenever the superior and commanding Powers of the Soul are exercised in a high Measure, they must unavoidably put in Motion the corporeal Appetites.

IF the Understanding represents, in a full and strong Light, the good and amiable Nature of any Object, and upon that the Will chuses and moves to it, with a Force proportionable to the beautiful and attractive Image given of it; this must of Necessity stir and agitate the Passions of Love, Joy, Desire, and Hope, if the Object be represented as attainable: For Instance, If the Understanding offers to the Will of an avaricious Man, a great Treasure, as within his Reach, and easily to be procured, it is not possible, but that the Passions of Love, Desire, and Joy should be excited; and it is the same when great Honours and Power are offer'd to the Choice of the Ambitious, or ravishing Scenes of Pleasure to the voluptuous Man; for while the Mind receives warm and lively Impressions from that Idea of Good, which is drawn by the Imagination in the most alluring and inviting Shape, the Spirits in the Brain, by whose Mediation those Images are formed, are moved in such a lively and active Manner, that their Motion is propagated down from the Head to the Heart, and produces there the Passions before mention'd. But notwithstanding, these pious Passions are a considerable Duty, when thus duly raised and employed upon spiritual and divine Objects, and should still be cherished and encouraged, when under the Guidance of the superior Faculties, the Understanding and Will; yet they must not be mistaken for true essential Goodness, I mean that higher rational Love to God above mention'd.

IT happens very often, that the younger, and less experienced Christian, especially when he first engages in a Course of Religion and
Virtue,

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Virtue, feels stronger Perturbations and warmer Affections, than the old, settled, and confirmed Practiser of Piety; whom, perhaps, he exceeds in devout Passion, as much as the other surpasses him in the rational Love of God, which is steady, calm, and sedate, as the other is vehement, sensible, and uneven. It is the first that denominates a true Christian, and does often subsist, when abstracted from; or little attended with passionate Emotions; but devout and lively Passions can by no Means constitute true Piety without the former. But not sufficiently instructed in this important Distinction, new Converts to a pious Life are apt to run into a great Error; that is, that superior Virtue is attended with constant devout Passions; and in this they place Religion in an unwarrantable Degree. The Principles of Divine Love, which, as said, is the moral Rectitude and Perfection of the Will or rational Appetite, tho' often dispassionate in confirmed and experienced Christians, preserves a greater Sincerity of Heart, and a more constant and equal Purity of Life, than is seen among new Converts at their most early setting out, though they then feel great Ardour and Affection: For, as their good Passions are then quickly raised, so likewise are their bad ones, which makes a great Vicissitude and Inconstancy in their Temper of Mind, and a great Deformity and Inequality in their Lives. It is therefore from their Ignorance of the Nature of Divine Love, or their Inattention to their own Lights, that when the unconfirmed Christian does afterward, by Degrees and Custom, find an Abatement of his first Fervour and lively Disposition of Mind, in the Exercise of pious Duties, Prayer, Meditation, Christian Conversation, and participating of the Holy Sacrament, he is ready to condemn himself for Decay of Piety, Love to God, and Zeal for Religion, which is a Conclusion by no Means to be justified. The strongest and most approved Christian is he, that is with the greatest Difficulty prevailed upon to do any evil Action, and is the most constant in Performance of all religious Duties, though he does not perceive those warm Affections, which he once felt. 'Tis certain that Christian loves God in the most eminent Degree, who keeps his Commands with the fewest Deviations and Relapses. If therefore, in the Progress of your Christian Course, you should find, that your first Passionate Fire and Emotions are diminished, beware that for that Reason you do not condemn your self for going

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backward in Religion: For if you grow more able to resist Temptations, and are constant and steady in your virtuous Actions and religious Duties, tho' with less sensible Fervour; and if, notwithstanding you find some Deadness and Indisposition to pious Exercises, you persevere in the Performance of them; and tho' your good Passions are not so strong and active as before, yet however your bad ones are weaker, and much more governable; you may be certain that you have not lost, but are a great Gainer by this Alteration; and you may draw great Comfort and solid Satisfaction to your Mind from this unerring Rule, that he is the strongest Christian, and truest Lover of God, who expresses the greatest Unwillingness to break his Laws.

YOU will say, perhaps, if this be right Reasoning, then to what Purpose is it, that any other Considerations to excite Divine Love should be urged upon Men, than those which represent our blest Creator as the most amiable Object, and are proper to convince them, that he alone is their chief End and Felicity? for the superior Faculties being thus address'd to, if they receive suitable and just Impressions, the inferior Passions will be insignificant; or if they are useful in a lower Degree, yet will they be moved of Course, by the commanding Powers of the Soul. To this I answer, That the Passions which, as I have said, arise from a vehement rushing of the Spirits from the Imagination to the Heart, and the various Agitations of the Blood that passes through it, are natural, and result from the Constitution of Man, that is, the vital Union of his Soul and Body; and therefore cannot be vain and insignificant. On the contrary, they are of great Use, and indeed necessary, when under the Conduct of a well-informed and regular Judgment, and are far from being the Distempers and Deformity of the Soul, as some conceited Philosophers have absurdly imagined. I desire you to observe, that as sometimes the Motions of the Soul are begun in the upper commanding Powers, and thence propagated downwards to the lower Appetites; so very often the first Motion is felt in the Passions, and by them it is transmitted to the higher Faculties: For the Mind is each way equally moved, either by intellectual Ideas formed immediately in the Imagination, or by the Impressions of corporeal Objects made upon the Senses, which excite those Passions, that rising upward affect the Soul: Hence you will remark,
that

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that when Civil Governours publish their Laws, they do not enforce them with Reasons that should demonstrate the Duty of Subjects to pay Obedience, but they address themselves to the Passions of their People, their Hopes and Fears, by promised Rewards and threatned Punishments: And the Divine Law-giver did the same to *Adam*, in his State of Innocence, *In the Day thou eatest thou shalt die*; which Application to his Fears and implanted Principle of Self-Preservation, was intended to secure his Obedience; hence it will evidently appear, that the Soul is often carry'd to vertuous Actions by the vehement Impulse of the Passions, especially in this degenerate State, where Reason is deposed from the Government of the Man, while inordinate Appetites and corporeal Inclinations make Head against the Power of the upper Faculties, sway and impel the Soul, and express the Marks of Dominion over it. And in this Condition, the most frequent Way of coming at the Mind, and to make there the first Impressions of Religion, is by the Mediation of the Passions. Reason is in this corrupt State reduced to a low Ebb, and has lost its Command over the inferior Appetites, which lord it over the Hearts and Lives of Men; the Passions must therefore be address'd to, and brought over, in order to gain the Will. The Minds of Men are generally estranged and alienated from the Blest Author of their Being, the only Object of their Happiness, and so depraved and blind, that they cannot see the amiable Goodness of Religion, and the heav'nly Beauties of Holiness, the true Dignity and Perfection of their Nature; whence it comes to pass, that to awaken and recover them from their Lethargick and Death-like Stupidity, and bring them to a due Sense of their Duty, and Concern for their greatest Interest, it is necessary to urge upon them such Arguments as are proper to work upon their inbred and inseparable Principle of Self-Preservation, and to lay before them the eminent Danger they are in, of suffering the unspeakable Wrath of God; if they continue impenitent in their Guilt; that by this Means their Fears may be excited, and those Fears may make them cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* And when they are instructed and convinced, that there is no Way in the World to escape the dreadful Punishments, that are denounced against contumacious Sinners, but Faith, sincere Repentance and Reformation, they may, as the Gospel requires, steadfastly believe in

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In Church, confess their Offences with due Contrition, and effectually resolve to amend their Lives, that they may not be condemned to everlasting Misery, otherwise unavoidable. And this, I believe, while accompanied with the Assistance of the Spirit of Sanctification, is the ordinary Method of bringing sinful Men to a due Sense of their Condition, and recovering them from their unregenerate State: But then it is as true, that after they have entered upon the Practice of Religion and Virtue, from the Motive of Fear, and the Principle of Self-Preservation, the new Converts, when they are accustomed to a virtuous Life, and grow acquainted with Piety and moral Goodness, do by degrees begin to taste the Sweetness, and see the intrinsick Beauty of Religion. They now find it agreeable to Reason and a well-disposed Mind, and feel Satisfaction and Pleasure arising from it, till at length, from liking and approving, they esteem and love it, not only as a Means to deliver them from their Fears, but as they perceive its amiable Qualities, relish its Goodness, and are convinced that it is the Dignity and Perfection of their Nature; that it makes them resemble their Divine Author, the sole Object of their Happiness, and qualifies them for the Fruition of him for ever.

THUS by gradual Practice, the religious Dispositions of Men, that proceeded from the Motives of Fear, are refined and exalted to a Habit of Divine Love, even that Love which is the moral Rectitude of the Will, or rational Appetite, that dignifies and enobles the Mind, and places the Possessor of it amongst Christians of the first Rank. This, as I have said, I look upon as the ordinary Rise and Progress of true Religion in the Mind of Man, which is begun by Fear, and finished by Love; and that Fear of Punishment is a proper Argument to be used to startle and affright the Sinner, that he may see his Danger, and for his own Preservation, endeavour to avoid it, by entering upon the Practice of Vertue and Piety, though as yet he does not taste their intrinsick Goodness, is evident from this, that the inspired Prophets, our Saviour himself, and his Apostles, especially *St. Paul*, do, by setting before Men, in the most moving and pathetical Expression, the Wrath and Judgments of God denounced against impenitent Criminals, endeavour, by exciting their Fears to awaken and rouse the stupid and unthoughtful People, and by that Means, to bring them to Repentance and

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and Reformation. Instances of this kind are numberless through the sacred Scripture; and though this religious Disposition of new Converts, is far from being of the most pure and exalted kind, like that which proceeds from such Divine Love as I have described before; yet beware, Sir, of condemning it as spurious and unacceptable to God: Far from that; from whatever Motives either Fear, Hope, or Love, any Man is induced, upon Christian Principles, to confess his Sins with Sorrow, and to forsake them with Sincerity, I shall always believe he is a good Man, and an Heir of Salvation; and how happy would it be for Mankind, if any, or all of those Motives put together, could prevail so far upon them. I am,

SIR,

(with sincere Love and Esteem)

Your Humble Servant,

THEOPHILUS.

The Second LETTER.

EUGENIO to THEOPHILUS.

SIR,

I Return you hearty Thanks for your *Third Letter*, since the Revival of our religious Correspondence: I have perused it with great Satisfaction, and foresee that it will be very beneficial in giving me just Sentiments of the Nature of divine Love, by settling the great Distinction of that Virtue, as it is intellectual, and the Habit of the rational Appetite, and as it is only passionate and corporeal: Convinced by your reasoning, I perceive that the first, which is the Rectitude and Perfection of the Will, determined to the Choice of the Divine Being, as the Object of our Happiness, must be the Principle,

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that constitutes sincere Religion, denominates an established Christian, and entitles him to the Favour of God, and everlasting Felicity; and I believe, as you affirm, that in this pious Disposition, the superior commanding Faculties of the Soul cannot exert their Operations in a high Degree, but their Force must be propagated farther; for in such a Case the inferior Appetites and Passions, as by a Motion of Consent, will unavoidably be excited, except, perhaps, in some cold and flegmatick Complexions; or in good Christians, who by reason of their great Age, are incapable of such warm and active Emotions.

AT the same time I am convinced by your Arguments, that in this our degenerate State it is necessary to apply, by proper Motives, to the Passions of Hope and Fear, and by awakening and putting them in Motion to affect the Heart; by which Means divine Instruction may gain Admission to the superior Faculties, and incline them to esteem and choose the Author of our Being as our chief End and Happiness. For, as vehement evil Passions often over-power the Understanding and Will, and hurry Men headlong to Vice and Impiety; so good Passions, when they are strong and warm, will, in proportion, have the like Influence on the commanding Powers of the Soul. *By the Terrors of the Lord, says St. Paul, we persuade Men:* Whence it appears, that your Assertion is true and solid, that the Conversion of a sinful Man to a religious Life, owes its first Beginning to Fear of Punishment, tho' after a considerable Progress the Christian is moved by more sublime and noble Principles; those of Faith, Divine Love, Desire, Joy, and the Hopes of the Fruition of their Maker in endless Joys. And now his Piety is carried on by the Pleasure that rises from his own Taste of the Goodness of Religion, which after long Acquaintance and Familiarity, grows up by Degrees to greater Maturity, becomes a second Spiritual Nature, and is the Perfection of the leading Powers of the Soul, as you express your self in your Letter. Upon these Reflections, I am determined to cultivate and improve the superior Divine Love, which is the habitual Bent and Inclination of the Will to the supream Being, as the most excellent and most amiable Object, and the ultimate beatifick End of Man. And in order to this, I resolve, by Divine Assistance, to use those proper Arguments, and prevalent Motives which you have suggested to me. This I am convinced,

will

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will cherish and strengthen the Root of sincere Virtue at the Heart, and make it bring forth heav'nly Fruit in the Life and Conversation: Nor shall I any longer place Religion so much in warm Affections and passionate Efforts, in the Performance of pious Duties, as in the moral Rectitude of the superior governing Faculties: I shall nevertheless, always think it my Duty to maintain a fervent Zeal in the Practice of Religion; and take Pleasure in devout Passions, while they keep their proper subordinate Place; for then they quicken and animate Devotion, affect and warm the Heart, and blow up, and spread abroad the Fire of Divine Love in the commanding Powers; and by this Means, I believe they must be highly useful and subservient to the carrying on of virtuous Dispositions to a more mature and perfect State. Hence it is that I cannot agree with any modern Divines, who shall, with the Stoick Philosophers, look upon the Passions as hurtful or useless, and therefore recommend Repentance without Sorrow and sensible Contrition, a broken Heart without Pain and Trouble, Devotion without ardent Affections, and think that the Contemplation of the glorious Perfections of God, and the Anticipation and Foretaste of immortal Bliss, should be unaccompanied with any consequent Joy, Delight, or sensible Perceptions in the Heart, which say they are corporeal Passions, and therefore should be dismissed from Attendance on spiritual Duties. But this, as you urge, is directly contrary to the Tenour of the Scripture, where the inspired Teachers every where apply themselves to the Passions in the most moving Diction and vehement Turns of Expression. I hope, *Sir*, I shall in a short Time receive your further Sentiments upon Divine Love, in the same practical Manner as before.

I am,

SIR,

Your most Humble Servant,

EUGENIO.

The

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The Third LETTER.

THEOPHILUS to EUGENIO.

SIR,
SINCE I find by your Answer to mine, that my past Discourses on Divine Love have been acceptable to you, I have here sent you more of my practical Sentiments on that great Subject: If I begin to be tedious, by drawing out my Discourses to so great a Length, as I grow apprehensive I shall be, the Candour of your Temper, as well as your Request, that I should continue this Intercourse, assure me, that you will pardon my well-meant Zeal in pursuing this Province, what Defects soever you find in the Execution.

THAT you may always enjoy the Benefit and Pleasure of Divine Love, may it be your careful Endeavour, by constant and importunate Prayer, and serious and lively Meditations on the Nature, the Word and Works of God, to raise your Heart and Affections to him; watch with unwearied Diligence, and suffer not the sacred Fire to go out; and to that End, always supply it with proper and necessary Fuel; and when it sinks and languishes, fly to the most powerful Incentives to revive it.

FOR this Purpose, among other Motives, contemplate the Divine Attributes, as displayed in the Work of our Redemption by Christ: When we were deprived of the Sight of God, and the Prospect of Heaven; when we fell from that high and happy Condition in which we were made, to a State as low and base as Sin and Folly could sink us; when we had lost the Apprehension of the Divine Favour, and had contracted an Aversion to our Maker, our Life and Felicity; when we had abandon'd our selves to forbidden Pleasures, and taken up with these mean and sordid Enjoyments, instead of the divine Delights that proceed from a reciprocal Love between God and an innocent Mind, it pleased the Almighty, out of his boundless Goodness,

to

to send his Son, the Son of his Love, into the World, who laying aside his Glory, and vailing his Divinity, transacted with Man the blessed Design of his Recovery : He opened to us the Joys of Heaven, and disclosed the immense Treasures of his Father's Love: His Life was one continued Miracle of doing good ; his Doctrine was full of the glad Tydings of our Salvation; and his whole Aim was, by the most attractive Methods, to win our Hearts to our great Creator: For this End he lived, and for this End he died, that he might satisfy the offended Justice of God, and secure the Honour of his Government, that so we might no longer look upon him as a displeased and angry Judge, but as a merciful Father reconciled to us by the Merits and Intercession of his Son.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE Love! Ineffable Compassion! the Joy and Admiration of Angels, and the Object of Man's eternal Praises! God so loved the World, that from his free Choice and Commiseration he formed the astonishing Scheme of Man's Salvation. God so loved us, while miserable Sinners and ungrateful Rebels, that he gave his Son to die, that he might deliver us from everlasting Death: He descended from Heaven, from the blissful Bosom of his Father, to save us from sinking into Hell: He bore the Terrors and Indignation of the Almighty, that we might enjoy the Light of his Countenance, and the ravishing Views of his reconciled Face: To cleanse us from our Guilt and Pollution, he shed his own most precious Blood; and to raise us to Heaven, he humbled himself to the Habitations of the Dead. God so loved us, that from his own compassionate Motion he employed a long Series of stupendious Miracles of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, to reinstate us in the Possession of our lost Felicity, having decreed to glorify himself, by making us, of the most miserable, the most happy Creatures.

NOW, Sir, as by such proper Meditations you should endeavour to strengthen this divine Habit, so you should carefully remove all Impediments that will obstruct the Operations of it; you must not therefore entertain and cherish any sensual forbidden Love, or pollute your Soul with unhallowed Flames: God will not share your Affections with his Creatures, or accept an imperfect divided Heart. Unclean Passions bear a perfect Contrariety to divine Love; these are such dif-

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ferent Plants as cannot flourish together in the same Soil; for they will still combat each other, and one must certainly decay, and wither. These Dispositions are as incompatible in the Heart as Life and Poison, and it will be impossible to give a peaceable Entertainment to them both. What Communication is there between Light and Darkeness? How can this pure and divine Fire dwell with foul and malignant Flames? You must therefore take your Farewel of all immoderate Affection to the Delights of Sense, and declare an irreconcilable and open Hostility to the World. You must be deaf, and unsensible to those Enjoyments that defile and debase the Mind, that it may be fit to be inspired, and wholly possess'd by divine Love.

YOU must take care to live an inoffensive, humble Life, and to keep a Conscience clear and undisturbed: A guilty Soul has no Power or Will to love the Divine Being: If you transgress his Laws, you will look upon him as an offended and angry Judge; and while your conscientious Reflexions and secret Remorse vex and disquiet your Soul, you will be averse to think of God, or to approach his Presence; but like our first Parents, you will start and tremble at his Voice; you will be ready, like them, to fly affrighted from his Face; and instead of exercising Divine Love, you will be covered with Shame and Confusion. To keep a Conscience void of Offence is the only Way to preserve an uninterrupted Peace and Tranquillity within, and be able to look up to Heaven, and contemplate the Deity with Joy and Delight. How sweet and pleasurable a Life would it be, to have your Heart and Conversation, together with your Treasure, in Heaven? How far, by this Means, would you be rais'd above these low uncomfortable Regions? How far remov'd from the threatening Clouds, that continually gather here below? Secure by your Distance, you would without Terror hear the Storms and Tempests that always molest this dark and unquiet World. How much above the Apprehensions and Taste of sensual Men, would be the Delights which you would always enjoy? And how easily would you despise all the Temptations of Sense, and pity or deride the poor and low Condition of the Rich and Great? And now bespeak your self in Words like these:

MAY my chief, if not only, Pleasures flow from this pure Fountain of divine Love, and I shall ask no other Happiness. Let this be my Portion,

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Portion, and I am abundantly satisfied. Farewel vain World, Riches, Honours, Pleasures, farewel: I want you not; I would not be encumbered and embarrassed with such an uneasy and unprofitable Burden: I would not allow you any Share in my Affections; alas! what can you do to refine and perfect this immortal Soul? What Foundation can you lay for a solid and lasting Peace? Have you eternal and immense Goodness for me, like God? Can you purify and exalt my corrupt and depraved Faculties, and restore to me the lost Beauty and Perfection of my Nature? Can you preserve me from the greatest Calamities here, or from a miserable Eternity hereafter? Can I expect such Things, which, however, are absolutely necessary, from such empty and perishing Trifles? Most certainly I cannot. What occasion then have I for Riches, and Honour, and the Pleasures of this World? What is it that I should desire them for? What reasonable End can I think of, why I should place my Heart, and set my Affections upon them? Contemptible Vanities! Can you be the Happiness of a reasonable and immortal Nature? Shall I abandon my self to the Love of a worthless Toy, court a Phantome, and be enamoured of an empty Cloud?

CAN I longer forbear to love God, so infinitely amiable, and when it is impossible to find any Object besides, that can justly invite my Esteem, or deserve my Affections? Is it not the highest Folly in the World, to hesitate and make a Difficulty, whether I should yield up my Heart to God, when there is nothing else but Sin and Vanity to attract it? Let me therefore love him with all my Soul, and Strength, and Might, and all inferior Satisfaction, only in Obedience and Relation to him. Let me value the temporal Blessings that I enjoy, as the Demonstrations of his paternal Care and Bounty, the Tokens of his Kindness, and the Means to support me in this mortal State: May I thus love his Creatures, as they subserve this divine End; and not destroy their Goodness by an idolatrous Separation of them from their due Subordination to God; and let me never remove them from their Order and Dependence, to set them in a higher Place than they deserve, or bestow upon them any Respect or Affection that do not ultimately terminate in the blest Creator. What good Things soever I possess for Necessity or Delight, let them be so much regarded as they promote the Habit of divine Love, and excite

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cite the Operations of it; and may my Esteem be always proportionable to the Degree of such their Usefulness. May I therefore delight in my Friends, as their Example, Counsel, Conversation or Bounty engage or assist my Love to God; and let my Health, and Life, and Being, be dear to me, that I may live to him in whom *I Live, and Move, and have my Being.*

MAY all my Actions flow from this divine Principle; may this be the internal Spring, that sets in Motion all the Capacities and Powers of Soul and Body: Let it reside like Life in my Heart, and from thence diffuse its Virtue and Influence through the whole Man, inspiring my Thoughts, quickning my Desires, and animating all my Actions, that they may be acceptable to God.

MAY this divine Principle reign uncontrouled within me; and may all the inferior Faculties of the Mind acknowledge its Dominion: May no rebellious Appetite oppose its Government, nor any Thought, Instinct or Desire, deny Subjection to its Dictates. May the Integrity of my Heart, and the Purity of my Life, declare the Power and Force which Divine Love maintains within me: May it influence my whole Conversation, and reach the minutest Actions of my Life; and when I do not sensibly feel its Operations, yet let my regular, constant, and cheerful Obedience, its most natural and genuine Effect, shew that it is certainly alive; and may it still increase in Power, and spread and enlarge its Empire over my Heart and Life, till it utterly breaks all sinful Habits, and subdues the Strength of all evil Inclinations: By this Means let it gain a compleat Conquest over the Flesh and the World, and triumph in the unmolested Possession of my entire Soul. Let it not be enough for me to shew some weak and imperfect Signs of Love to God, but let me strive to advance it to a lively and active Degree. Why should I be satisfied with Life that approaches so near to Death? Why should I be contented that my Love to God should languish in such a weak consumptive State, when there are so many efficacious Means at Hand to render it vigorous, strong, and healthful? Let it not be enough that some divine Rays penetrate the Clouds and thick Darkness, that have so long covered me, to give me a weak and doubtful Twilight; but let me implore the Sun of Righteousness to break in upon my Mind, to scatter these Shades, and spread abroad a full

full prevailing Day. Let me labour with unwearied Diligence to raise my Heart and Affections more to Heaven, and to keep them more constantly there, that so I may possess my Soul in Peace and Tranquillity, bear all my Sufferings with Patience and Submission, and perform all the Duties of Religion with Pleasure and Delight.

IN the mean time, may I not forget to be thankful for that inferior Measure of Divine Love, that the sacred Spirit has kindled within me. Surely this is infinitely a greater Blessing, than if I had been born to a Kingdom, or was possessed of all the Treasures and Glory of the World. Though my Condition, as to worldly Enjoyments, should be mean and obscure, yet should I not be fully pleased, and in my deliberate Thoughts account my self exceeding happy? Why should I envy Monarchs their Crowns, or rich Men their Possessions? This is frequently the Happiness, such as it is, of the worst of Men, who will have Time enough to lament their Choice, and curse their vain and fatal Enjoyments. But the smallest Seeds, the least Sparks of sincere Love to God, that purifies and enobles the Mind, unites it to its proper beatifick Object, and entitles us to all the glorious Benefits of the Sufferings of Christ, is such an inestimable Mercy, as ought to fill our Hearts with Joy, and our Mouths with everlasting Praises. What greater Blessing can Heaven give, or Man receive, except the Completion of this imperfect Habit? and what can I do to express my Gratitude to my Divine Author, but by loving him yet more, and yielding up my Heart entirely to Him? Let me therefore contemplate the amiable Object of this Heavenly Passion, till its Flame, reflected and redoubled upon it self, shall become stronger and more vigorous, and fill my whole Soul with its Heat and Light. How much better is it to feel in our Minds an ardent Love to God, than to possess all the Profits and Pleasures which the generality of Mankind pursue? The lowest prevailing Degree of this celestial Quality, is infinitely more desirable than the most Prosperous Condition on Earth: When it is in its mournful and penitential State, grieving for Sin, and bewailing its own Weakness and Imperfection; it does even then afford more solid and rational Satisfaction, than all things which the World can bestow; nor would I exchange its Fears and Sorrow, for all the Delights of wicked and ungodly Men. And here, Sir,

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that I may not presume too far upon your Patience, I will conclude this Letter. I am,

SIR,

Your Humble Servant,

THEOPHILUS.

The Fourth LETTER.

EUGENIO to THEOPHILUS.

SIR,

IT was with great Satisfaction that I read your last Practical Meditations on the excellent Subject of Divine Love. Your earnest and pathetick Expostulations; your just and irresistible Reasons, and the moving Terms of Diction, I acknowledge with great Thankfulness, went to my Heart, and excited warm and devout Affections: When my divine Fervour was much abated, I read your pious Discourse again, and again, and it always produced the like good Effect; and in Imitation of your Manner of Soliloquy and Expostulation, I have exercised my Thoughts on some other spiritual and important Subjects, and have reaped such a considerable Benefit from that Practice, that I perswade myself those Divine Truths, which hover unoperative in the Imagination of many, and produce but few good Fruits in the Life and Conversation, lose their Force and Efficacy, for want of frequent and serious Meditation, that should urge and press them home upon the Heart, till it feels their Virtue, and receives their Impressions: And therefore, Sir, I am exceedingly obliged to you, for communicating to me this Method of drawing forth, by secret Contemplation, the Energy and Life of Divine Notions, till they gain Admission to the Soul, stir up generous Passions, and engage it in pious Resolutions. I acquaint you, Sir, with the good Effect which I have found from your religious Correspondence, not only to express my Gratitude to you, my great Benefactor, but likewise to encourage you, whom I look upon as a sincere

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Lover of God and Man, not to break off your spiritual Commerce, but to communicate to me what Sentiments you may have behind on the great Theme, which you have chosen for our Intercourse; or what Instruction soever you shall think fit to give me, on any other divine Subject. I am,

SIR,

Your most Obligated

Humble Servant,

EUGENIO.

The Fifth LETTER.

THEOPHILUS to EUGENIO.

SIR,

THE Heart of Man is exceedingly deceitful and hard to be known, whence we often entertain wrong Opinions of our selves and our Actions. This saving therefore I interpose, if I am not misguided, and under the Power of Self-Delusion, I declare that the chief Ambition which I feel, is that of promoting the Honour of God and the Good of Mankind: And hence it is, that I perceived a sensible Pleasure, when I perused your last, in which you tell me, that you have reaped such spiritual Advantages from my Contemplations on Divine Love. Thus encouraged, *Sir*, I send you some other Thoughts on that important Article, with which I shall conclude my Discourse upon it.

WHILE you take care, by proper Means and Motives, to cherish the Root of Divine Love in your Heart, that it may enrich your Life with plenteous Fruits of Piety and good Works, you should sometimes commiserate, with unfeigned Compassion, the unhappy State of those Men, who have lost all spiritual Taste, are estranged from the sincere Love of God, and by their pernicious Choice, have alienated their Hearts to the Profits and Pleasures of this World. You should therefore sometimes say within your self, How deplorable is the Condition of those Men, who, ignorant of their Divine Original, and their chief End, have plung'd themselves
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the Cares and Pleasures of this World, and despised or disbelieved the Happiness of the next; whose Inclinations are turn'd aside from God, the Fountain of all Good, and the only Object of their Felicity, to the low and transient Vanities of this Life? The Consideration of your sad Condition, is enough to melt the Heart, penetrate the inmost Soul, and turn the Eyes to a Fountain of Tears. What a moving Prospect is it, to see Men overspread with the Leprosie of Sin, stupid and obdurate in Guilt, and ready to enter into a State of eternal Misery, and yet so infatuated and blind, as to be wholly ignorant of their terrible Danger? What Compassion is great enough to be exercised towards such unhappy Creatures? O that they knew how sad their Condition is! Miserable Men! Dark, insensible Criminals! Could I open your Eyes, and shew you your Deformity, and unspeakable Danger, you would stand amazed at the Prospect, and tremble to look about you; you would start back, and be affrighted to see your selves so foul and unclean, and your Indignation against your selves would be greater than I am able to describe. You love your Sins so well, and are so stupified and hardened in your Ways, that you will still go on, and flatter your selves that your Condition is not so miserable as it is represented. Your invincible Adherence to earthly Pleasures will not let you see your Pollution and dreadful Hazard, but will it self alone, be an Answer to all the Arguments, which are used, to make you sensible of your sad Condition. The Perswasions of Men are not forcible enough to change your Inclinations; their Calls are not loud enough to awaken you; only his Voice that makes the Foundations of the Earth tremble, is able to move such Lethargick Sinners; only that Power that enlivens the Dust, can quicken such stupid and lifeless Souls. Gracious Lord! look with Pity on these miserable Creatures; speak and they will hear; open their Eyes, and disclose to them the immense Treasures of thy Love; dart down a heav'nly Beam into their Minds, and let them see thy glorious and amiable Perfections, and they will not forbear to love thee; inspire their Hearts with thy divine Grace; change their Natures and evil Habits, and let them feel the attractive Force of thy infinite Goodness, that they may despise the World and the Pleasures of it, and chuse Thee alone for their End and Happiness.

AND as you ought, Sir, to exercise the greatest Compassion to these unhappy Creatures; that are Strangers to God, and Enemies to Religion; so may you always cherish the greatest Esteem and Love to those excel-

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lent Men, who have withdrawn their Desires and Affections from the World, and fixed them upon their blest Creator, as their chief Felicity. May you pay more Esteem and Honour to these God-like Persons, than to the greatest Heroes, and the most renowned Princes on Earth. These are the living Images of the Deity, and the Purchase of the Blood of the Son of God, the Lights of the World, and the Glory of Mankind. If you should love God as he has manifested himself in his Creatures, and admire him in the wonderful Impressions of his Power, Wisdom and Goodness, that are seen in the various Parts of Nature, you are much more obliged to do so, when you behold him in the most excellent Parts of his Creation. Good and pious Men give us the most lively Representation of God's Perfections, and the Rays of Divine Goodness communicated to them, render them so beautiful and amiable, that he that loves the Deity, cannot but love his rational Creatures, who in Purity so much resemble him. Those are the Sons of God, his Friends, his Favourites, and the Heirs of his Kingdom, and will you not love those who are so much belov'd by him, and on whom he has conferred so much Honour? If then you are sincerely devoted to God; you will certainly love and delight in such, who have the same Interest, Employments, and Inclinations with your self. It is the greatest Folly and Absurdity in the World; to believe that you love the Divine Being, whilst you hate, deride, and persecute those who love him most and serve him best: May you never fall into this Delusion, that has imposed so much upon the World; may you never imagine that you have the least Spark of Love to God, if in your Heart you hate and despise pious Men, who bear the greatest Similitude to his Holy Nature. How many Thousands in the World persuade themselves that they love God, while they scorn and deride his Image, and afflict and insult his Servants; while they inwardly condemn their Persons, Purity, and humble and blameless Lives, and account them as much unfit to live in the World, as the World is unworthy to entertain them? But how ill soever they are treated by their Enemies, how poor and Low soever their Condition is, yet may you sincerely love, and highly honour them; and may it be the Study of your Life to do them good.

AND if you have so much Reason to love God in the imperfect Image which you see of him in his Servants on Earth, how much greater Reason have you to love and admire him in his Saints and Angels, who are in Heaven, and have yet more lively, and more perfect Characters of his Divine Per-

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imprinted on them? How lovely and beautiful are these Godlike
Flames? How bright are these ministring Flames of Fire? What Glory
flows from the Image of God shining on them? How clear and capacious
are their Understandings? How full of Love and Joy their Wills? How
regular and harmonious all their Faculties, and how pure and spotless their
whole Mind? What a ravishing Prospect would it be, to see these happy
Creatures adhering to their beatifick Object, with inseparable Affection,
to see them all inflam'd with Love, and transported with everlasting Joys?
To see them drinking in Rivers of divine Pleasures, that flow clear and
untroubled from the Fountain of all Good, and sending them back in eter-
nal Praise? Blessed Spirits! how happy is your Condition, that love God
perfectly, and are perfectly beloved of him? I envy not your Happiness,
but earnestly wish to be Partaker of it. Your Love to God knows no Im-
perfection or intermission: You find no deadness in your divine Affec-
tions, and meet with no Interruptions in your Transports: You feel no Cor-
ruptions inclining you to sensual Objects, no Indisposition of Soul or Body,
to weaken or abate your Love and Delight. How desirable is your Con-
dition! How much more than all the Treasures and Glory of the World?
May I love you, and imitate your Love to God; may the Contemplation of
your divine Affections increase and advance my own; may I borrow from
your Orbs fresh Light and Heat, to illuminate and warm this cold and
obscure Soul. How languishing are mine, compared with your active
Flames? How weak and inconstant are my pious Inclinations, and how
strong and established yours? As heavy Bodies descend to the Earth, as
Sparks of Fire mount upwards, and Rivers flow to the Ocean, so naturally
you move to God, the Glorious Object of your Happiness: In him, as in
your Centre, you find eternal, unmolested Rest; from the Sense of his
Love to you, and the Operations of your own to him, you derive all the
Felicity you can possibly receive. How much in vain would it be to offer
you the Enjoyments and Glory of this World? How would you deride
such Toys and Follies, and reject the Proposals with the highest Scorn?
You have no carnal Affections, no Appetites left, to which such Tempta-
tions can be addressed with the least Hope of Success. You love God, you
love him only, you love him perfectly, and you stand fixed and immoveable
in your happy Choice. Unconceivable Happiness! How gladly would I
part with all the World to be admitted to your Society, there to be Par-
taker of your celestial Delights; let me admire you as the most excellent
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and most amiable Parts of the Universe; and tho' I see you not, yet I feel that I love you, as I do my absent Friends; tho' there be so great an Interval between us, as that betwixt Heaven and Earth, yet Love's Wings, and can pass it in a Moment: My Thoughts and Contemplations can reach you at the greatest Distance, and this Way I may, in some Sort, enjoy your heav'nly Conversation. Methinks I see your glorious Choir, all ravished and transported with Joy and Love; methinks I hear your divine Praises and triumphant *Hallelujahs*; and whilst I contemplate your glorious and happy State, I begin to taste a narrow Stream of that heav'nly Pleasure, of which you possess the immense Ocean.

MY Soul rises by strong Efforts of Love and Desire to your happy Regions, and while I mingle with your celestial Company, I see your Crown of Glory, and observe the Extasies of immortal Bliss. By Anticipation, I pre-enjoy the Happiness of Heaven, and the unspeakable Delights of a glorified State. How earnestly now I wish to be qualified, by a pure Heart, and a pious Life, for my Admission into the happy and illustrious Assembly of the Righteous, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, where I may see the greatest Manifestations of the Almighty's Glory, and feel the highest Expressions of his Goodness, that humane Faculties, in their most rectified and exalted State, are capable of receiving? Where I may adore, admire, and glorify the great Author of my Being, with all the Powers and Capacities of my Soul; where I may love him, and rejoice and triumph in him, as the ultimate Object of my Felicity; and where, in the Company of Saints and Angels, I may sing Praises and *Hallelujahs* to him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever; and where likewise I shall be admitted into the Presence of my exalted Lord and Saviour, there to behold his Glory, and take Possession of that holy and happy Place, which he is gone before to prepare for all those who sincerely love and serve him.

THUS, Sir, I have complied with your Desire. I shall here conclude my Meditations on this Divine Subject. I have before bespoke your Candour, and made some Apology for the Defects of this Performance. The writing of these Letters, I acknowledge has been useful to my self, and I hope will prove so to you; and since the Propagation of Piety and Virtue is what we should earnestly desire, if you are of Opinion that these Letters, should they appear abroad, will promote that great End, you have my Consent to make them publick. I am, Sir, Your Humble Servant,

THEOPHILUS.
The

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The Sixth LETTER.

EUGENIO to THEOPHILUS.

SIR,

THIS brings you my unfeigned Thanks, for the Favour of your last Letter; in which, as you tell me, you have finished your Meditations on the great Subject of Divine Love. I am highly pleas'd, that you have given me the Liberty of making them Publick, being perswaded they will be advantageous and useful to others, as they have been to my self: For I must acknowledge, that by the Perusal of them, I have not only gain'd, as I believe, a full and clear Idea of Divine Love, in which the Rectitude of our Faculties and the Dignity and Perfections of our Nature so much consist, but have likewise acquired some Growth in that heav'nly Habit, and greater Facility in the Exercise of it. But notwithstanding, Sir, you do not intend to communicate any more of your Sentiments on that sublime and excellent Theam, yet I cannot but solicit and importune you to continue your Correspondence, by writing to me on other religious Duties, such as the Fear of God, Delight in him, or Dependance on him, or any other Divine Subjects, which you shall judge most proper for my further Instruction and Improvement, which will be highly acceptable to

Your Obligd

Humble Servant,

EUGENIO

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West-Smithfield.*